

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

# SENATE BILL NO. 1352

92ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR STOLL.

Read 1st time March 1, 2004, and ordered printed.

TERRY L. SPIELER, Secretary.

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## AN ACT

To repeal section 160.405, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to high risk charter schools.

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*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:*

Section A. Section 160.405, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 160.405, to read as follows:

160.405. 1. A person, group or organization seeking to establish a charter school shall submit the proposed charter, as provided in this section, to a sponsor. If the sponsor is not a school board, the applicant shall give a copy of its application to the school board of the district in which the charter school is to be located, when the application is filed with the proposed sponsor. The school board may file objections with the proposed sponsor, and, if a charter is granted, the school board may file objections with the state board of education. The charter shall include a mission statement for the charter school, a description of the charter school's organizational structure and bylaws of the governing body, which will be responsible for the policy and operational decisions of the charter school, a financial plan for the first three years of operation of the charter school including provisions for annual audits, a description of the charter school's policy for securing personnel services, its personnel policies, personnel qualifications, and professional development plan, a description of the grades or ages of students being served, the school's calendar of operation, which shall include at least the equivalent of a full school term as defined in section 160.011, and an outline of criteria specified in this section designed to measure the effectiveness of the school. The charter shall also state:

- (1) The educational goals and objectives to be achieved by the charter school;
- (2) A description of the charter school's educational program and curriculum;
- (3) The term of the charter, which shall be not less than five years, nor greater than

**EXPLANATION--Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in this bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

ten years and shall be renewable;

(4) A description of the charter school's pupil performance standards, which must meet the requirements of subdivision (6) of subsection 5 of this section. The charter school program must be designed to enable each pupil to achieve such standards; and

(5) A description of the governance and operation of the charter school, including the nature and extent of parental, professional educator, and community involvement in the governance and operation of the charter school.

2. Proposed charters shall be subject to the following requirements:

(1) A charter may be approved when the sponsor determines that the requirements of this section are met and determines that the applicant is sufficiently qualified to operate a charter school. The sponsor's decision shall be made within sixty days of the filing of the proposed charter;

(2) If the charter is denied, the proposed sponsor shall notify the applicant in writing as to the reasons for its denial;

(3) If a proposed charter is denied by a sponsor, the proposed charter may be submitted to the state board of education, along with the sponsor's written reasons for its denial. If the state board determines that the applicant meets the requirements of this section and that granting a charter to the applicant would be likely to provide educational benefit to the children of the district, the state board may grant a charter and act as sponsor of the charter school; and

(4) The sponsor of a charter school shall give priority to charter school applicants that propose a school [oriented to high-risk students and to the reentry of dropouts into the school system] **that meets the eligibility requirements of an alternative charter school as defined in subsection 10 of this section.** If a sponsor grants three or more charters, at least one-third of the charters granted by the sponsor shall be to schools that **meet the eligibility requirements of an alternative charter school as defined in subsection 10 of this section and** actively recruit dropouts or high-risk students as their student body and address the needs of dropouts or high-risk students through their proposed mission, curriculum, teaching methods, and services. For purposes of this subsection, a "high-risk" student is one who is at least one year behind in satisfactory completion of course work or obtaining credits for graduation, pregnant or a parent, homeless or has been homeless sometime within the preceding six months, has limited English proficiency, has been suspended from school three or more times, or has been referred by the school district for enrollment in an alternative program. "Dropout" shall be defined through the guidelines of the school core data report. The provisions of this subsection do not apply to charters sponsored by the state board of education.

3. If a charter is approved by a sponsor, it shall be submitted to the state board of education which may, within forty-five days, disapprove the granting of the charter. The

state board of education may disapprove a charter only on grounds that the application fails to meet the requirements of sections 160.400 to 160.420.

4. Any disapproval of a charter pursuant to subsection 3 of this section shall be subject to judicial review pursuant to chapter 536, RSMo.

5. A charter school shall, as provided in its charter:

(1) Be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations;

(2) Comply with laws and regulations of the state relating to health, safety, and minimum educational standards;

(3) Except as provided in sections 160.400 to 160.420, be exempt from all laws and rules relating to schools, governing boards and school districts;

(4) Be financially accountable, use practices consistent with the Missouri financial accounting manual, provide for an annual audit by a certified public accountant, and provide liability insurance to indemnify the school, its board, staff and teachers against tort claims. For the purposes of securing such insurance, a charter school shall be eligible for the Missouri public entity risk management fund pursuant to section 537.700, RSMo. A charter school that incurs debt must include a repayment plan in its financial plan;

(5) Provide a comprehensive program of instruction for at least one grade or age group from kindergarten through grade twelve, which may include early childhood education if funding for such programs is established by statute, as specified in its charter;

(6) Design a method to measure pupil progress toward the pupil academic standards adopted by the state board of education pursuant to section 160.514, collect baseline data during at least the first three years for determining how the charter school is performing and to the extent applicable, participate in the statewide system of assessments, comprised of the essential skills tests and the nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests, as designated by the state board pursuant to section 160.518, complete and distribute an annual report card as prescribed in section 160.522, report to its sponsor, the local school district, and the state board of education as to its teaching methods and any educational innovations and the results thereof, and provide data required for the study of charter schools pursuant to subsection 3 of section 160.410. No charter school will be considered in the Missouri school improvement program review of the district in which it is located for the resource or process standards of the program. Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed as permitting a charter school to be held to lower performance standards than other public schools within a district; however, the charter of a charter school may permit students to meet performance standards on a different time frame as specified in its charter;

(7) Assure that the needs of special education children are met in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

6. The charter of a charter school may be amended at the request of the governing

body of the charter school and on the approval of the sponsor. The sponsor and the governing board and staff of the charter school shall jointly review the school's performance, management and operations at least once every two years.

7. (1) A sponsor may revoke a charter at any time if the charter school commits a serious breach of one or more provisions of its charter or on any of the following grounds: failure to meet academic performance standards as set forth in its charter, failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management, or violation of law.

(2) The sponsor may place the charter school on probationary status to allow the implementation of a remedial plan, after which, if such plan is unsuccessful, the charter may be revoked.

(3) At least sixty days before acting to revoke a charter, the sponsor shall notify the board of directors of the charter school of the proposed action in writing. The notice shall state the grounds for the proposed action. The school's board of directors may request in writing a hearing before the sponsor within two weeks of receiving the notice.

(4) The sponsor of a charter school shall establish procedures to conduct administrative hearings upon determination by the sponsor that grounds exist to revoke a charter. Final decisions of a sponsor from hearings conducted pursuant to this subsection are subject to judicial review pursuant to chapter 536, RSMo.

(5) A termination shall be effective only at the conclusion of the school year, unless the sponsor determines that continued operation of the school presents a clear and immediate threat to the health and safety of the children.

8. A school district may enter into a lease with a charter school for physical facilities. A charter school may not be located on the property of a school district unless the district governing board agrees.

9. A governing board or a school district employee who has control over personnel actions shall not take unlawful reprisal against another employee at the school district because the employee is directly or indirectly involved in an application to establish a charter school. A governing board or a school district employee shall not take unlawful reprisal against an educational program of the school or the school district because an application to establish a charter school proposes the conversion of all or a portion of the educational program to a charter school. As used in this subsection, "unlawful reprisal" means an action that is taken by a governing board or a school district employee as a direct result of a lawful application to establish a charter school and that is adverse to another employee or an educational program.

**10. Any charter school that has a significant percentage of its enrolled students identified with the risk factors associated with "failure to persist to graduation" and which meets the criteria of this subsection may elect to be labeled and considered an "Alternative Charter School" by the department of elementary**

and secondary education. Sponsors shall evaluate alternative charter schools based on the charter theme and the individual, social, and academic needs of its students. Sponsors may adopt individual, social, and academic assessments that measure student performance on an individualized time frame. Nothing in this section shall be construed as permitting an alternative charter school to be held to lower performance standards than other public or charter schools. A school may be designated as an alternative charter school if the school either:

(1) Has a higher percentage than their local school district's average in one of the following categories:

- (a) Students with limited English proficiency;
- (b) Students with family court or division of family services involvement;
- (c) Students with special service needs per an IEP or coverage by section

504;

- (d) Students eligible for free or reduced price lunch; or

(2) Contracts with their local school district to receive students needing alternative services under:

- (a) Missouri safe schools;
- (b) LEA hearing office guidelines; or
- (c) LEA truancy office guidelines.

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